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THE HIGH SCHOOL GREEK TEACHER: HIS OBLIGATION AND HIS OPPORTUNITY[1]

When Greek meets Greek his plaint and his plea are both alike intelligible. The real tug of war comes when the Greek meets the barbarian, the son of a barbarian, the progeny of the get-rich-quick twentieth-century American spirit. Not that I would utterly condemn this. The eager pursuit of wealth is better than a lazy indifference to all things; and the desire to become self-supporting is to be commended. And if in the process a possible scholar is occasionally spoiled to make a successful business man or engineer, perhaps the world is no worse off in the long run. But the tangible wealth and the power which attend success are keeping these callings full, and this appeal to the live American boy will always be sufficient to draw thereto the necessary number to build our railways and to develop our water powers.

But as nature is full of beauties which escape the notice of those unaware of their presence, but which keenly delight and mightily uplift the trained observer, so in literature, art and life, there are latent wonders and mighty powers unseen and unfelt by those not trained to see and feel. Now and then is found a soul which has from the first shown a passion for classical music; but, were such its only patrons, the grandest compositions would rarely be performed. The great body of music-lovers must needs have acquired the taste which is none the less real and none the less fine. So, I take it, must be the love of Greek. Most of the recruits must be led to it and taught to love it, and the question is: 'Are we, as teachers, justified in so doing?'

If we are satisfied that the growing generation shall consider the colored supplement, the vaudeville monologist and the Tammany civic administration as ideals, then go at once for the bread and butter studies. If we say that anything higher is out of the question for any of this generation, then by all means abandon all culture studies, turn the boy into a money-making machine as soon as possible and fit the girl at once for her Kinder, Kueche and Kirche. It is inevitable that for some generations to come, perhaps forever, there must be large classes of manual and unskilled laborers. For these our vocational and trade schools are preparing in increasing proportion. The ever present danger of such schools is that they may attract those for whom something higher is possible. I feel, then, that we are justified in urging Greek upon those who appear to us capable of the best. More than this, we are morally bound to do so. How can we escape condemnation if we refuse to urge what we feel to be best?

Here a public High School teacher is sometimes handicapped, in that he may not urge any one course, the public policy being to leave all doors open equally wide, and to let the choice remain entirely with the pupil. *He* may discuss it with parents of worldly ambitions and friends of no ambitions at all, but those most competent to advise must remain officially dumb. And yet Public School pupils do sometimes ask the advice of their teachers and private school instructors have many opportunities, sought and unsought, to influence pupils to begin the study of Greek.

This is the condition which confronts me annually: enough first year High School pupils having elected Latin, to choose from these the ones to whom Greek would be of more use than other subjects, and to influence as many as possible of these to take it. I set my desires on those to whom, by reason of their intelligence and tastes, Latin has been interesting, and whose records indicate that they are willing to work. Some come to me to ask, to others I must go or write. Correspondence through the long vacation has won for me a number of pupils, of whom I am proud. If left to themselves, conscientious pupils choose what their limited experience and their untaught friends say will be immediately helpful toward earning a living or appearing in society. When Greek is suggested, they naturally ask, 'of what use will it be to me?' In answering this very proper inquiry, there is confronted the difficulty that, of the numberless advantages daily experienced by the classically trained adult, none will appeal fully, some will not appeal at all, to immature and inexperienced inquirers. The ground must be cleared before we begin to build.

First must be shown the general principle that subjects apparently of slight use may be more advantageous than those which seem immediately applicable to the problems of getting along in the world. In a primitive society men actually earn their food and clothes and lodging; they kill the game, shear, spin and weave the wool, and cut down trees for their huts. In a more advanced stage, they earn money which can be turned into food, clothes, and shelter as needed. So in the primitive society, education was a training in manual arts to be directly employed; now it is a training in intellectual qualities to be indirectly, but none the less surely, employed. You seek something immediately applicable, and what is there? The average person in daily life uses only the mathematics needed to deal with grocer and butcher. Hence why study algebra and geometry? Of what use is science, when for five cents you may travel across the city without knowing what makes the trolley go? History—why those people are all dead: so why study about them? Literature—English is good enough, and, if there is anything worth while in any other language, there are translations. So may be dismissed one group after another, mathematics, science, history, and language—and the earnest pupil begins to see that, beyond the simple problems of arithmetic and the ability to read and write the most ordinary prose, there is nothing indispensable for making a living. Clearly the ability to earn a livelihood does not depend on booklearning. Then why touch the books at all? Just for this reason: a vocational course will make you a first-rate carpenter or electrician, stenographer or nurse, and that's all. You will stay through life just where you were at the beginning of your business career, dependent on your own manual labor. You haven't the breadth, the knowledge of things and men, and of what men have thought and do think of things and of other men to enable you to rise from your place, form judgments, and direct others intelligently. And what is worse, you may never realize that you are deficient, but will always think yourself misjudged and ill-used when others are promoted over your head.

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[1] This paper was read at the annual meeting of The Classical Association of New England, in Worcester, Mass., in April, 1913.

Thus I try to take from the mind of the child (of his parents, too, if I can get at them) the idea of the advantage of the immediately available bread and butter studies.

Next must be shown that the essential thing is to gain perseverance, the habit of concentration, ability to reason, appreciation of the best which has been thought and done, and the power of expression. And whence come these? Perseverance and concentration may be developed only by long and determined pursuit of what is most difficult; reasoning power comes from assimilating the most clearly expressed thoughts of man on classic subjects, that is subjects of living interest, from following narratives and arguments to the end till one may approve or condemn the author's conclusions; appreciation is obtained only by living with the best in art, character, life, and pondering it; power of expression is gained only from long familiarity with words, expressions, structure and figures of the literatures which are the parents of our own.

'But is all this', cries the pupil, 'to be found in Greek?' 'It is'. 'How am I to know it?' 'How do you know anything which you have not experienced —the beauty of Switzerland, the wonders of the deep sea, the power of radium, the character of Napoleon? Clearly your knowledge depends on what experienced people tell you, and so it must until you have advanced far enough to be yourself a competent judge'. Glimpses may be given of what Greek will supply in the way of general information on countless subjects.

The kinship of words may be shown: telegraph, phonograph, autograph, cinematograph, metallophone, xylophone, megaphone, sozodont, mastodon, democrat, aristocrat, autocrat, pandemonium, panoply, pantomime, polygon, Polynesia, monogram, monotone, monoplane.

Next the kinship of ideas may be made clear (and here the Loeb translations are going to prove very convenient): the ship of state, the torch race, the mills of the Gods, etc. Then the form: the meter of Longfellow's Evangeline and Miles Standish— poems familiar to many young people—pupils feel to be of ancient and dignified descent, on hearing a few lines of Homer. And the substance: I may read an inscription (especially if I have a squeeze at hand): 'It seemed best to the Senate and to the people' compares well with 'Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in Congress assembled'.

But the pupil objects that this can all be obtained from translations, and I reply that, though he may buy picture postals of every corner of the earth's surface, he will therefrom draw little of the profit and still less of the delight of foreign travel. To the girl who intends to teach I try to make it clear that, though the Normal School graduates its students in a comparatively short time, they too soon become teachers of few subjects, narrow outlook and lost enthusiasm, unless they have learned of man's age-long struggle for knowledge of truth, have themselves touched here and there the great past, and have come to understand the relation thereto of their own daily labors. This I point out to her from the cultural and inspirational side; and from the practical viewpoint, I say to her that, as she would not venture to teach arithmetic without some knowledge of algebra, so she cannot teach English with the best success without a knowledge of Greek.

The boy who has leanings toward the law must be made to see that the able lawyer, in order to understand and straighten out the relations of man to man, must understand the origin of our civilization, our customs, our beliefs and ideas; he must see that law is but the crystalization of custom expressed in the terms current among the succeeding generations. Only then can he grasp the great principles which underly the administration of justice.

It follows that, even if you know what your work is to be, to choose only the subjects which apparently are of immediate use is to condemn yourself to a narrow and uninspired life. The thing to do, while the opportunity is offered, is to seek those possessions which will render all life fuller and better. The purpose of education is to put you in touch with the environment in which you are to live. It was Aristotle, the greatest of the Greeks and the founder of modern science, who said: 'To understand anything we must get back to its beginning'; and more and more, as your knowledge widens, you come to realize that in studying Greek you are getting back to the beginning of our civilization.

By getting in touch with the language and the thoughts of the ancients, you are gaining knowledge of our own world of ideas, the ability to grasp the thoughts of others and the power to do independent thinking. This mental equipment will make easy and delightful all further reading and study.

Often the objection is made: 'But I am not going to college'. And I reply: 'I am sorry, but perhaps you may: I myself said a week before graduating from High School that nothing could hire me to go to College. And perhaps you will decide that you want to go, too. But a College is only a higher school where you may study with the help of teachers and books. Even though you may not have the teachers you may still have the books. If the classical course prepares for college, it is because it is a preparation of the mind for grasping the contents of the world's best books. Unless on your High School commencement day you plan to renounce all reading, you cannot logically give up the classical course on the plea that you are not going to College. In fact, there is all the more reason why school, if it is to be your last formal education, should train your mind for further reading and thinking in private'.

Again the pupil objects that few will take Greek and he will be peculiar. But he wouldn't refuse an offered fortune because few may be rich! The things that everyone may have are usually not reckoned the most valuable. Not all are capable of achieving the highest things in life. These are necessarily reserved for the best minds and for those who can appreciate and will work for what is best worth while.

The pupil fears he will be laughed at: supply him with first hand arguments to back up his decision, and show him how to meet thrust with thrust.

'The languages are dead.' 'So is George Washington, but his work and influence still live'.

'You'll never speak Greek'. 'Not one in twenty of you will ever speak any language but English'.

'You will forget Greek as soon as you leave school'. 'You forget all your friends, if you don't go to see them occasionally'.

'I'd rather learn something which I can use in business'. 'Then get out of High School and go to trade school, or business college'.

'But I am learning about electricity and sound now, botany and physiology, history and civics'.

'I shall be able to pick up in a few evenings' reading on any of these subjects more than you will remember ten days after your final exam.'

For the parents, who will very properly want to know just why such apparently useless subjects are taught, the pupil must likewise be supplied with assurances. The son of a well-to-do family should remind his father that he himself promptly forgot all he knew immediately after leaving school, and should ask him whether in view of this he will say that his school days were of no use to him. Ask him just what it is that he learned in school, that is actually useful in his daily work. Get him to admit that the ability to make money is inborn, not acquired. Make him see that his own success has come from this natural ability within a trained mind, willing to work and knowing how to work; that this willingness and this knowledge were developed by the daily performance, through long periods, of definite and properly selected tasks. If the father is utterly without education, he is the more apt to know his own limitations and to desire his children to be free therefrom. He knows how often some great thought or scheme has come into his mind which would be of service to himself and his fellowmen, but that he could not find words to express it; and the son can show him that what he is doing secures practice in orderly thought and clear expression. The uncultured artisan or laborer is the one hardest to persuade. And he, beyond all the rest, is entitled to know what is being done by his child, for whom he is daily toiling and whose wages he is eagerly anticipating. He is willing to sacrifice, if he can see the ultimate gain, and children from such families more than others should be able to explain, out of thorough conviction, the reasons for Greek study. Circumstances are all against them: a plea to remain at school may appear a scheme to postpone going to work; culture studies push off the day when the wages of the child will make the lot of his parents a bit easier; the neighbors whose children are already at work seem just that much more prosperous. And, without a sincere belief that he is on the right track, a loyal and conscientious child will hesitate to plead for educational luxuries at the cost of a parent's toil. It is the teacher's part to instill and foster this belief, and to provide the pupil with the reasons therefor, in such form that he may be able to pass them on to his parents. If this is successfully done, the parent himself will be heard using the same arguments to his neighbors, when they remonstrate with him on the futility of educating his children. The seeds will be scattered more widely than we think. And, in defending himself to his neighbors, he will strengthen the belief in his own soul.

It is a long look ahead to the day when culture will be indispensable to the world's business and social success. It was a long look ahead through the Dark Ages to the Renaissance. When the profitable business of life was murder, the highest society despised even the simple art of reading. Prowess was everything, culture nothing. In the big business of our day, money is everything, culture nothing. But another Renaissance is not impossible.

During the first strenuous years in New England, I cannot imagine the early settlers finding much time for the higher life, cultured men though many of them were. And we should not be surprised that, amid the mad rush of the last two decades, the intense desire to master *things* and the prospect of sudden wealth have made the things of the soul seem of less importance. But as the number of those with time and money at their disposal increases, it is not only cheering to assume but also reasonable to expect that a day will come when prestige once more will be sought through culture, and again Macaulay's definition of a gentleman may be current—"One who reads Plato with his feet on the fender".

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REVIEWS

The Elegies of Albius Tibullus: The Corpus Tibullianum edited with Introduction and Notes on Books I, II, and IV, 2-14. By Kirby Flower Smith. New York: American Book Company (1913). Pp. 542. $1.50.

Professor Smith's edition of Tibullus commands attention as one of the most important books that has appeared in recent years in the field of Latin literature. The book is unpretentiously published—as one of the volumes of a series intended for use in Schools and Colleges. It is a question whether a complete Tibullus is a necessity in such a series, for Tibullus with his associates in the Corpus Tibullianum is usually read only in selections in our Colleges. For this very reason the book cannot be criticized on the ground that it contains too much interpretative matter (about 100 pages of introduction and 350 pages of notes—in fine print—to interpret 48 pages of text—in large print) for the average college student, since the book will be used only with advanced undergraduate or graduate classes. On the other hand, the nature of the series has set limitations and forced the exclusion of much material. It is a matter of particular regret that no commentary on the Lygdamus and the Panegyric of Messalla is published (though the text is included). The reviewer hopes that Professor Smith will publish this separately so as to give us a complete commentary for the Corpus Tibullianum.

No edition of Tibullus on such a scale has been attempted since that of Dissen, published in 1835. For this reason as well as for its intrinsic merit the book will be welcomed by scholars the world over. The text chosen (with some exceptions noted in an Appendix) is that of Hiller—the best, as being both progressive and conservative. Professor Smith's own attitude on matters of text can be judged from his note on 1.6.21: "Speaking in general, an ounce of manuscript, even when that manuscript is no better than the Ambrosianus, is worth more than a hundredweight of conjecture, or half a ton of theory". The ancient testimonia concerning Tibullus are also reprinted from Hiller. If these had been put into smaller type and the space thus saved had been given to more notes, the reviewer, at least, would have been better pleased. The book is not, and does not pretend to be, a critical edition, though many passages are well discussed in the Notes. Besides, Professor Smith has devoted more attention to such matters than the book reveals. The Appendix is of little real value and its excision would not harm the body of the book.

The Introduction contains the following chapters: Development of the Elegy, Life of Tibullus, Later Tradition and Imitation, Criticism and Discussion, The Corpus Tibullianum, Textual Tradition, The Poet's Art. Both Introduction and Notes shows the result of patient study of all the materials, primary and secondary, and the application thereto of splendid judgment. Judgment is perhaps the great characteristic of the book as a whole. The English is a delight, and two of the characterizations—of Horace and Propertius—must be quoted:

> Those fair and fragile Hellenic damsels of syllabled air that smile or frown upon us from the pages of Horace.—<Propertius> a lover of pleasure, yet with high ideals, a rapid thinker, but a slow and painful composer, a cool head, but an ardent heart, always young in years, yet, matured early as he was in the fierce sun of an absorbing passion, never young in spirit.—He <Propertius> even starts his melody as it were with a bang, like a man whose feelings are already too much for him.

The first chapter is necessarily brief—so brief